2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

643 flung the spear at one or two of his father's trusted advisers; but it is not recorded that he ever actually killed anybody with his own hands. In fact, he got on fairly well with his ministers, having drilled the seniors into complete submission to his wishes, and appointed among the younger members those
● 645 554 who were most of his own way of thinking. The most characteristic man in the Cabinet was the Hlethin Atwinwun, better known as the Hpaungwun. He was only of the second official grade, but none of the four wunmingyis had any real power. They dated from the last reign, and were practically over-ridden by the younger party. The king did, it is true, marry the daughter of the Kampat Mingyi, but that stolid old gentleman was always remarkable for his disinclination to do anything at all, and was not at all likely to exert himself unduly for the sake of precarious pre-eminence. Therefore the ex-Mayor of Mandalay, in conjunction with the Yanaung prince, a favourite of the Queen Supayalat's, and one or two others of the young Burman party, became the most representative ministers.

The Atwinwun wore the dragon tattooed on the nape of his neck. Fourteen years before he was a slave, and in position little better than a coolie. His rise from this rank might have been a credit to him if it had been effected by his own powers. But he rose by a mere accident, and carried all the tendencies of his original position with him. In 1866, when two of King Thibaw's half-brothers, the Myingun and Myingundaing princes, rose in rebellion against their father, the late king, the Hpaungwun — he seems more familiar under his old title—was one of the guards in the palace. After the rebels had killed their uncle, "the War Prince," they made for the Summer Palace, where the king was at the time along with Colonel Sladen, the British Resident. The Summer Palace is a small building outside the stockade of the actual nandaw, and it was foreseen that his majesty would make immediately for the eastern gate, which is quite close at hand. A man was therefore stationed there with orders to kill King Mindôn whenever he made his appearance. All happened as had been surmised with one slight exception. Royal blood in Mandalay never went outside the palace on its own legs, and when his majesty

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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reached the gate he promptly jumped on the intending regicide's back and bade him carry him over the esplanade. The man was so overcome by the royal presence, or so slavishly accustomed to do what he was ordered, that he obeyed. When they were safe within the inner stockade he stooped down to let the king dismount, and his sword fell from the folds of his waistcloth. None but the king may carry arms within the nandaw, and the Hpaungwun, grasping the situation, snatched up the sword and cut the man's head off. Mindôn Min, with a curious regard for this mixture of barbarity and rapidity of action, made the coolie a subordinate official on the spot, and since then the Hpaungwun has gone on distinguishing himself as on this occasion. He was promoted successively through the grades of slipper-bearer, tea-server, and betel-box holder to that of the Governor of the Royal Rafts or Barges (Hpaungwun), and Mayor of Mandalay (Myowun), which latter steps he gained through his activity in the palace massacres —loyalty and energy his patent called it. King Thibaw found in the prompt and ruthless wun a willing and enthusiastic helper in the murder of the princes and princesses. Naturally he was one of the king's firmest supporters, for Thibaw's fall meant his own certain death. His squat figure and vulturine face made him the most easily recognised of the court circle, and he repaid the aversion of Englishmen with a most demonstrative hatred. Perhaps this was because his features, and especially his nose, suggested a European among his forebears. As Hlethin Atwinwun, or Minister of the Interior, he had supreme command over all the lower fluviatile provinces, and had a large military force at his command. He escaped punishment and became a trader after the annexation.

Equally high in the king's favour, and not less fierce in their denunciation of the English, were the Taingda Atwinwun and the Yenangyaung, also of the same second grade. They, too, were prominent in the massacres, and were reputed to drink curaçoa in tumblers. If they really did, it would account for a great deal. Both were slaves of the young Thibaw prince when he was a boy in the English Missionary school, and followed his fortunes into the Royal

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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Monastery. As chiefs of the Letthôndaw, the Royal Page Bodyguard, they had the opportunity which won their rank. A daughter of the Taingda married the Hpaungwun, and the Atwinwun in consequence gave occasional dinners to the European and quasi-European dwellers in Mandalay. The guests were, as a rule, not in a position to brave his anger by a refusal, and had to endure most elaborate indignities at his hands. All the most humiliating formalities of the palace had to be observed towards the young minister, and the *menu* was said, by the victims, to be the worst of them all. In regard to this, it must be remembered that it took a very great deal to hurt the dignity of some Mandalay Europeans, and also that they were as fickle as any mob.

These three atwinwuns were the most powerful ministers, and had greater influence with the king than any of their technical superiors. The four wungyis were, with the exception of the Upathi, of very little account with any one. The Laungshwe Mingyi had been for long nearly bed-ridden, and was not able to appear even at Mindôn's funeral. The other three had all been in Europe, but the most that can be said of the Kampat Mingyi is that he became the king's father-in-law, while the Yaw was absent for nearly two years on an expedition against the Shan mountaineers. He effected nothing warlike, and rumour said that he was so fully occupied in keeping the troops from dispersing to their homes that he had no time to fight. The fourth, however, was a remarkable man. The Upathi, better known as the Kinwunmingyi, had been very prominent for years, and he lived for twenty years after the annexation as a pensioner of the British Government. He used to be commonly spoken of as the premier on English analogy, but there was really no such dignitary known in Burma, and the Kinwungyi's substantive appointment was simply that of foreign secretary. He was twice to Europe on embassies, and his naturally acute mind was thus enlarged in its views. Had it not been for his great command over the public feeling, and his influence even over King Thibaw, there would certainly have been war between Burma and Great Britain in 1879. The foreign secretary was the representative of order and it was a bad thing for the

[701]

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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country when he was almost entirely driven from power, if not from office. He was a master of oriental craft, and tided through all the intrigues against him. He held a document from the late king, granting him immunity from all kinds of death. The list is a very frightful one, and ranges from vulgar, obvious beheading to the refined cruelty of throwing on a spread-eagled victim a nest of the fierce red ants known as kāgyin, whose mandibles drive a man raving mad in little over a quarter of an hour. But the palm-leaf patent would have been of little avail without a head that was well able to take care of itself. Like many of the older and better ministers, the Upathi Mingyi came from the cloister to office. On Mindôn's accession to the throne, he at once appointed the Pakhan Mingyi from a monastery to be an atwinwun, and in no very great time to the supreme rank of mingyi, a skipping of the lower grades which was very unusual, as was also the circumstance that the new minister married one of King Tharrawaddy's widows. The Kin Wungyi was in the Pakhan's monastery, shared his rise, and when the patron, who never lost the bilious, monkish look, and the cold, stiff pôngyi's manner, obtained the deliverance, succeeded him as mingyi. Had he been permitted, the foreign secretary would have made Burma a very different country from what it was.

The Upathi was certainly a superior man, and compiled some valuable digests of Burmese law after his retirement in Rangoon, but undoubtedly the most singular of the Mandalay court officials was the Pangyet Wun. He was a polished gentleman, spoke English fairly and French and Italian fluently, and had considerably more than a veneer of civilisation. As a boy he was at school in Calcutta, and having been well grounded there, proceeded to France. There he took his degree at the Panthéon, obtained a diploma in the Central Imperial School of Arts and Manufactures in Paris, and was altogether nearly twelve years in Europe. Notwithstanding his reminiscences of Mabille and the Champs Elysées, however, he accommodated himself very well to circumstances. When the young man returned to Mandalay, King Mindôn had a long talk with him, and finally said: "And these foreigners, then, have

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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they in any of their cities buildings such as adorn our Royal City of Gems?" Alas! your majesty," he replied, "the luckless people have not the magnificent teak; how, then, can they hope to raise anything comparable to the meanest of your palaces?" This courtier-like caution never deserted the Pangyet Wun. He never meddled with politics, and was content with his governorship of the glass manufactories, which meant anything or nothing, and commanded a nominal salary. But none of the ministers had any salary from King Thibaw, so that the cultured sinecurist was not worse off than his fellows. He consorted a good deal with foreigners, but averted suspicion by saying that it was merely to keep up his knowledge of their languages. No doubt he might have had a much higher post, but he had enough money, and did not care to run the risk of trying for more. That was also his view during the crisis and after the annexation.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

parties and pleaders in a suit. 14. Fearlessness in deciding cases, or being lion-hearted.

The supreme court in Burma was the Hlutdaw constituted of four wungyis, the chief ministers of state, who held their meetings in a hall within the palace, which took its name from the court. Each wungyi (great burden) had its wundauk (prop of the burden) as an assistant to sit with him in court. These wundauks formed the third rank of ministers, under the four atwinwuns (inner burdens), who were a kind of household ministers, or privy councillors, and sat in a special court, called the Byadeit, also in the palace. The latter had nominally as their chief duty to deal with the monopolies which Thibaw Min set himself to establish in such abundance. But as any man, no matter what special education or preparation he might have had, was considered eligible for any post, political, military, civil, or judicial, so both the Hlut and the Byadeit conducted all manner of business, from the external relations of the country to ordinary criminal or civil appeal cases sent up from the yôndaw, the criminal court, where the myowuns (city burdens), usually two in number, sat daily; or from the tayayôn, the civil court, where two tayathugyis (great men of the law) presided. In either of these inferior courts it was not at all uncommon for a wundauk, or even a wungyi, to attend and investigate important cases. But original suits were also frequently heard before the Hlut, and many cases were decided by the wungyis or any of the subordinate officials in their private houses. Formerly indeed this was the chief source of their salaries, for costs to the amount of ten per cent on the property under dispute went of right to the judge. The late king instituted the custom of fixed salaries, and Thibaw Min retained it, but neglected to pay the money. It will thus be seen that law matters, even in the capital, were carried on in a very casual, haphazard sort of a way. There was no attempt at a distribution of public business into departments, and each individual wungyi took his part in deliberations on all kinds of subjects with as much confidence as if he were an expert.

If the capital displayed a lack of system, there was

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1980) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

536* Burmese drama before, and most of U Ku's plays and *The History of*
177 *Theatre* and *Saw-phay and Saw-may* were produced at that theatre.
345 Admission to a performance was by payment, a practice alien to dramatic performances before the decadent period. The rise of 'matinee idols' resulted in the chief actor, instead of the leader of the orchestra, becoming the head of a troupe of actors. Formerly, a dramatic performance took place during the afternoon or early evening, but now because of the repeated applause for the popular 'idols', a performance lasted throughout the night.

554 I have stated how the prejudice against professional actors increas-
536* ed rather than diminished through the coming of popular actors or
178 actresses and the resulting rivalry between different troupes. But the prejudice was gradually overcome through the efforts of one man, Po Sein, who used to perform with two ex-soldiers standing beside him with rifles. By about 1912, his reputation as a leading actor was firmly established, and from that time onwards he concerned himself with raising the prestige of his profession by destroying the bitterness and the ugliness that had crept into it. By his charm of manner and personality, he soon established himself as the undisputed leader of the profession. His generous gifts to charity and irreproachable conduct soon acquitted the profession from the charge of immorality and irreligiousness. During the Great War he contributed much to the Red Cross Fund. For his services to charity and his profession, he was given a title by the Government in 1919. Such an honour had never been given before to an actor (had such a thing happened under the Burmese kings or even before 1914, the officials would certainly have vehemently protested, taking it as an insult to their class), and the Government's action was the final denial of the old dictum that actors and beggars were outside the pale of good society.

2. The Puppet Show

536* According to common tradition, the Burmese puppet show came
175 into being long before the drama, but as our knowledge of the history of the puppet show before the reign of Bodawpaya (1782–1819) is meagre, perhaps it will be better to consider first the puppet's history from that reign.

[645] It will be remembered that, as stated in Chapter II, Bodawpaya, under whom the court and the 'people's' dramas united together to give rise to a national drama, created a new ministry, that of the stage. The new minister, being a conservative courtier, wanted the drama

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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572. VILLAGE ELDERS IN CONCLAVE.

disperse as quickly as it was recruited or else it might develop into a band under a regular leader (*Bô*) and become the scourge of the country, rapidly attacking points separated by days' journeys. Against such bands the villagers combine and keep guard; torches are ready for night alarms. But when the brigands are too strong, the villagers have no choice but to enter into league with them and pay blackmail if they would not experience the horrors of barbarous war. At present brigandage is of very sporadic occurrence. Travellers are perfectly safe.

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Throughout Burma every man was liable to serve in war. He would have his own sabre and pike and would be provided with musket and ammunition, but no further accoutrements. Latterly the king's body-guards wore a sort of uniform (No. 9). Cannon are mentioned as early as 1350, and a century later, matchlocks were in use. Cæsar Frederick in 1569 speaks of pikes and arquebuses and good cannon. When disbanded, the soldiers had to surrender their muskets, but numbers were smuggled away, to add to the rigour of the guerilla waged by brigands and the severity of the villagers' retaliation.

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573. BURMAN OFFICIAL RECEIVING APPLICANTS.

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The military leader is called *Bô*; the civil governor or minister of the king, *Wun*, which means a burden or trust. The former might be a young man, the latter but rarely so. Age and influence are almost synonymous in Burma. If the elders—headmen, *lôdyt*—are agreed upon a thing, it is done. The village elders represent the fundamental substratum of government in Burma. They are consulted by the officials on matters affecting the people, whose natural, if unofficial,

century, the punishment for abduction of women was enhanced from one of confinement in irons to that of death. Thus what the English lawyer would understand by the term "criminal law" was considered to be the personal concern of the king. Therefore, when the ruling king died, and a new king ascended the throne, all persons undergoing punishment for crimes committed under the previous king, automatically were freed. Criminal jurisdiction therefore was considered to be merely an administrative function of the crown, and it concerned the executive, and not the judicial, officers of the state. Modern European writers have ever emphasized the despotism of Burmese kings, but the Royal Edicts proclaimed at the beginning of each reign clearly showed that the Burmese king was not a blood-thirsty individual devoid of all mercy. In the Edicts, we find the king delegating the function of meting out criminal justice to three of his Chief Ministers, admonishing at the same time that they should temper justice with mercy. The king in the Edicts ordered that even in capital crimes, the punishment should be one of banishment, and the sentence of death was to be reserved for vicious criminals. Even when the sentence of death had been passed, the execution was to be postponed for at least ten days so as to enable the king to consider the case and alter the punishment to one of banishment if the facts justified such alteration.

But as in England, the king was considered to be the fountain of justice, for his was the supreme court of the land. The kingdom was divided into provinces, each under a viceroy. Each province was further divided into cities, each city under a governor. Each city or city area was subdivided into towns and each town or town area into villages, with a headman for each town and each village. The courts of the headmen of towns or villages dealt with suits of small value, and there was a right of appeal from those courts to the courts of the governors of cities. The courts of the governors exercised both original and appellate jurisdiction, and appeals from these courts lay to the court of the viceroy, which also exercised both